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MUŠANNITU(M).

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Peiser in his *Babylonische Verträge des Berliner Museums*, pp. 305–6, discusses the term *mušannitum* (written *mu-ša-an-ni-tum* and *mu-ša-ni-tum*), which is of frequent occurrence in the legal literature of the Babylonians, without, however, reaching any satisfactory conclusion. He thinks that it may refer to some kind of construction for purposes of irrigation. Tallqvist leaves the word untranslated (*Die Sprache der Contracte Nabu-naids*, p. 139).

There is a Talmudical term מְשׁוֹנִיתָא, with which I believe the Babylonian word is identical.* The word מְשׁוֹנִיתָא occurs in the Talmud in the sense of (a) jaw, (b) cliff, grotto, and thirdly, embankment. In two passages it is expressly applied to a field. *Baba Meši'â*, Fol. 108b, we read “אֶפְסִיק מְ” “a precipitous mound separated the fields” and again *ibid.*, 109a, “אֶהְרַר לִיה מְ” “he surrounded the fields with an embankment” for which a variant has גִּרְרָה “he fenced it in.”

It is in the sense of “embankment” in which *mušannitum* appears to be used in the Babylonian legal tablets, the reference being to the protection which the physical conditions of the Euphrates valley rendered necessary in order to protect fields and property from being damaged by the rise of the numerous streams in the rainy season. The artificial canals would of course be similarly affected by this season and embankment works would thus be rendered necessary in all sections of the valley even where canals existed, the waters of which might be directed into the fields during the dry season. The solidity of these embankments was further assured by the use of wooden or iron beams employed in their construction and acting as a support to the earth heaps. With this brief explanation, we may pass to an examination of some of the passages in which the term occurs.

* See the passages in Levy's Talmudical Dictionary where, however, the various meanings of the word are not properly distinguished. Through the courtesy of my father, I am enabled to quote from his manuscript the article on the word as it will appear in Part IX. of his Talmudic Dictionary. מְשׁוֹנִיתָא f. (denom. מְשׁוֹנָא tooth) (1) jaw, *Erub.* 100a *** (2) cliff, bluff, grotto, *Gen. R. s.* 10¹ דִּמְא מְ דִּמְא the bluffs at Caesarea, *Tan.* 23^a *Midr. Till.* to *Ps.* cxvii. לִיה אֶהְרַר a grotto formed around him; *B. Meši'â* 108^b מְ אֶפְסִיק מְ a precipitous mound separated the fields; *ib.* 109^a מְ אֶהְרַר לִיה מְ he surrounded the fields; (*MS. Hamburg* גִּרְרָה fenced it in) with an embankment.

Tablet No. 910 of Strassmaier's *Nabunaid* texts is a receipt for dates delivered in part as an annual assessment, and in part *ana dullu ša mušanitum ša nâr Sumanti*, i. e. "for the embankment work at the Sumanti canal."

Nabunaid No. 770 gives a list of workmen engaged *ša dullu ina eli mušannitum ša Gilušu* "for the work in connection with the embankment at Gilušu."

Further operations at this same place are referred to in Nbd., No. 784, which is a receipt for a variety of iron material and instruments required: *ana eli mušannitum ša NIH Gilušu*, "for the embankment of NIH Gilušu;"* and again in Nbd. 1080 where 80 workmen engaged in the enterprise—which must have been one of considerable magnitude—are enumerated in groups as they were furnished by the contractors.

Nbd. No. 1002 testifies to the payment in silver *ana dullu ša mušanitum ša Hallab* for the embankment work at Hallab.

In a text from the days of Darius published by Peiser, *Babyl. Verträge*, No. 143, there is a reference to three beams that are to be delivered *ina muḫḫi mušannitum ša Kar-ri Taš-me-tum* "in connection with the embankment work at Karri-Tašmetum." From this passage as well as from Nbd. No. 784, it appears that the term *dullu* might be omitted without affecting the force of the phrase.

Nbd. No. 6 (as No. 910) is a receipt for 20 kur of dates, full measure (?) (*i-mit-tum*), joint ownership in a house *u edutum ša eli mušanitum* "and choice dates† for embankment" where *dullu* (= work) is again to be supplied.

Lastly, in Strassmaier's tablets of the reign of Cyrus, No. 180, ll. 10 and 12, in an assessment list of dates due to the Ebarra temple of Babylon, there are included two payments of this kind, one of 17 kur, another of 26 kur made in lieu of the sum of one mana and one mana plus 11 šekels respectively, charged *ana dullu ša mušanitum*, "for embankment work." From this we may be permitted to conclude that the Babylonian temples were not only, as we know from various sources, great business corporations (Peiser, *Babyl. Vertr.*, pp. xvii-xxix) that farmed out lands for cultivation, but that they also accepted contracts for land improvements. The passages above given will suffice to show that the meaning proposed for *mušannitum* answers the requirements and accords with the context involved.

A word remains to be said as to the form of the Talmudical and of the Babylonian term. The former **משוניתא** is a form like **מפשוטיתא** ("stretch-

* Seed of NIH(?) Giluša is spoken of Nbd. No. 690, 13, and the same place with the determinative for city is found Nbd. No. 398, 37.

† I connect *edutum* with Talmudic עֵדִית, which signifies "choice," but reserve the proof for another occasion.

ing out,") mašnunîtha, becoming by contraction m'sunnîtha; and so far as the ordinary meanings of the word are concerned ("jaw, cliff, grotto, etc.,") it may be regarded as a home production. In its technical sense, however, as applied to the embankment along a canal as a protection to fields and property, what more natural than that the term should, like so many other technical terms pertaining to architecture, commerce and the industrial arts, have been borrowed? With the Babylonian mušannitu before us, there seems hardly any reasonable doubt that such was the case. Upon this supposition, the slight variation between the Babylonian and the Talmudical form can readily be accounted for. The transposition of the Waw from behind the first letter to a position after the second letter—i. e. מְשֻׁנִּיתָא instead of מוּשְׁנִיתָא—is the natural consequence of the attraction exercised by the already existing מְשֻׁנִּיתָא. It is altogether likely that with more manuscripts at our disposal, a variant would be encountered with the Waw after the Mem or with the omission of the Waw altogether. The differentiation here proposed between מְשֻׁנִּיתָא and מוּשְׁנִיתָא does not involve any difference in the underlying stem. For the latter as for the former, and also therefore for the Babylonian mušannitum, the stem is שִׁנַּן. Though the writing with one *t* is unusual, while at the same time far from unparalleled,* mušannitum may very well be the feminine participle of the Pīl (II. 1) mušanninatum = mušannintum = mušanittum = mušanîtu(m). Tallqvist, it may be noted, also suggests the long quality of the vowel *i* in the word. The spelling with one *n* (Nbd. Nos. 910, 1002, 6) instead of two is of course a very common variant. The use of the word in the sense of embankment is deduced without difficulty from the fundamental notion of "to be pointed" attaching to שִׁנַּן. In Biblical usage already, שֵׁן is the "point of the rock" as well as "tooth." The embankment forming a kind of wall and supplied perhaps with turrets, as the ordinary wall of fortification was, could appropriately be designated as a "pointed" or a "turreted" object.

* Cf. ummātu = ummantu; ištātu = ištantu (cf. Delitzsch, *Assyr. Gr.*, § 49, b) with only one *t* despite the assimilated *n*, but lengthening of vowel instead of reduplication.